Economics PGCE: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Economics Education

1.1 Is teaching economics for me?

- One of the most important things when considering applying for a PGCE is to be enthusiastic about the subject you’d like to teach. Put simply, showing enthusiasm and a passion for economics is a key factor in helping us decide if a candidate is serious about teaching the subject.

1.2 What are the benefits of choosing economics as my subject of choice?

- Your teaching will stay current and relevant as it adapts to the changing local, national and world economy.
- You will become equipped in how to successfully implement and use many high-level teaching and learning strategies, including question and answer technique, group work, conducting whole-class discussions, project work, use of ICT and fieldwork.
- Students can love economics – taught well it can be a stand-out subject that explains the world in which we live and informs our life choices.
- Being an economics teacher can lead to rapid career progression. Many former student teachers have risen rapidly to senior teaching positions such as heads of department and headteachers.
- You can foster dynamic, independent, experiential, simulation and creative lessons.

2. Applying

2.1.1 How do I apply for the Economics PGCE at UCL Institute of Education?
Applications are run centrally through the online system of UCAS Initial Teacher Training (formerly the Graduate Teacher Training Registry) – see http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/teacher-training#

- The cost of application is £23, and for this you are able to apply to three course providers (one of which could be UCL Institute of Education, for example).
- During the application process you need to specify two referees who are happy to provide you with an online reference. To speed things up ensure they write their references online promptly as without them the application cannot be processed and sent to us or your other chosen course providers.
- You can apply to three courses/providers simultaneously. This means you may receive offers of a place for more than one course, and you are then in a position to choose which is right for you.

2.2 How long does it take to process my application?

- Once your UCAS ITT application is completed (with references), processed by UCAS, and sent to UCL Institute of Education, we have a total of 40 working days (i.e. 8 weeks) in which to make a decision on the application. This includes interviewing appropriate candidates.

3. SELECTING & INTERVIEWING CANDIDATES

3.1 How do you select candidates for the course? / What are the entry requirements?

- All applicants sent to us via UCAS ITT are screened for appropriate English and Maths qualifications (C or above at GCSE, or equivalent), and a relevant degree, ideally at a 2:1 or first classification (though we would consider 2:2 classifications on a case by case basis).
- We select appropriate candidates for interview according to set criteria (see below).
- At interview we share the interview day selection criteria with candidates, covering such factors as good communication skills, ability to work collaboratively, ability to reflect critically, and enthusiasm for economics, the PGCE, teaching and helping young people learn and progress.

3.2 How many places for the course are there?

- There are 20 places available for the economics PGCE at the UCL Institute of Education for 2016-17.
• We offer places on a first-come, first-serve basis.

3.3 How competitive is recruitment to the course?

• A place on the Economics PGCE here is competitive – we require a good degree and only offer places to those candidates we think have the potential to become excellent economics teachers.
• Interviews themselves, however, are rarely competitive. Between 4 and 16 candidates will be present (including those applying for the Business PGCE) and if there are enough places available on the course, every candidate who meets or exceeds our selection criteria will be offered a place.
• Applying early in the academic year for the course beginning the following September means you are statistically more likely to secure a place on the course.

3.4 When do you stop taking applications for the current academic year?

• We continue recruiting candidates for the course until the course is full. Our course listing on the UCAS ITT website will indicate whether we are open or closed for applications (i.e. the course has vacancies or is full).
• We usually continue processing applications and holding interview days until July or in exceptional cases August.
• Once the course is full we continue to recruit for 2-4 ‘waiting list’ places. These are used if any applicant who has been offered a place has to withdraw for any reason before the start of the course.

3.5 When do applications open for the next academic year?

• UCAS ITT will determine when PGCE applications open. It is usually open by November of each academic year. Check their website for full details.

3.6 How can I get experience of economics in schools?

• Contact a range of local schools directly and politely ask to observe some teaching in economics and other subjects.

3.7 What are the specific selection criteria for interviews?

• In addition to the first-stage filtering detailed earlier, we are looking in particular for candidates with an appropriate degree, relevant experience in schools/with young people/in education, and an enthusiasm for economics.
• Relevant degrees could include economics, business economics and PPE.
3.8 How does the interview day work?

- You will experience a group-based activity, presentation, short one-on-one interview, an individual written task and question & answer session.
- The interview process takes half a day for the economics PGCE.

3.9 When do I have to have completed my QTS skills tests by?

- All applicants for initial teacher education courses (PGCEs, school direct) need to have passed two QTS skills tests before beginning their course.
- If you are offered a place following interview, we ask that you complete these no later than two months after this date.
- If the course is still open to new applicants in May/June/July, you need to complete your skills tests by the end of the summer term.

3.10 Can I complete the PGCE on a part-time basis?

- No. The Economics PGCE at UCL Institute of Education is a full time course.

3.11 Are there School Direct places available for Economics?

- School Direct is another pathway into teaching – and can comprise two different formats. School direct salaried is the name for the former Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP), often used where a school already has an LSA or TA they want to support to become a teacher. Salaried programmes see student teachers take on a much heavier timetable than a PGCE (more akin to that of an NQT), but STs are, as the name suggests, paid during the training year. In economics, salaried positions are usually rare as the school takes on the burden of the training responsibility – and as economics is a relatively small subject, many schools lack the capacity to deliver this at the requisite level. Where salaried places are offered, it is worth checking with the provider whether they already have a preferred or known candidate in mind – historically they have often been offered where a school already has a teaching assistant (for example) working at the school and whom they wish to train up into a fully qualified teacher. It is also worth checking what expertise the providing school has in economics – they will be the successful candidate’s primary source of expertise, with a university provider supporting but not leading the course.
- At the Institute, school direct unsalaried/tuition fee route works much more like a PGCE – except that students are recruited by a joint interview process between a specific school and then the Institute. Students on these programmes are paired with a specific school from the start, but usually follow the timetable of a PGCE – spending between 12 and 18 weeks at that school, and 6-12 weeks at another.
3.12 What happens if I am not successful in my application to the course?

- We will notify you of this via UCAS teacher training.
- If you have other providers listed on your application, you may still receive invitations to interview and offers via them.

4. The PGCE Year

4.1 How does the PGCE work in terms of practical teaching and theory?

- 120 days of the PGCE are designated as 'in-school'. This is split between two school placements of roughly the same duration: the first from October to January, the second from February to May. In these you will build up to teaching 50% of a normal teacher’s timetable – 9 to 11 hours of lessons in economics or related subject per week.
- 60 days are based at the Institute. Here you will learn about economics education in depth – for example, enhancing your subject knowledge, understanding pedagogy and approaches to effective teaching and learning, building your toolkit of learning activities, learning how to manage behaviour for learning, knowing how to assess young people’s progress and how to support students with special educational or language-based needs.
- At the Institute, subject-specific sessions are structured to allow modelling of many of the approaches and activities to both enable you to critically reflect on each and encourage your own use of such strategies in your classroom.
- You will submit two written assignments during the year – both will have elements of theory and reflection on teaching and learning.

4.2 I am also interested in business education. Will there be an opportunity to teach this at all during the PGCE?

- Yes. Many school departments offer both economics and business and you may be able to pick up some business teaching at A level or GCSE. This means our student teachers can be strong candidates when they go to interview for a given job because of their breadth of curriculum experience.

5. COSTS & FUNDING

5.1 How much does the Economics PGCE cost?

- At time of writing, tuition fees for the course are £9,000 for EU-based students.
5.2 Is there any financial support to help with the costs of the Economics PGCE year?

- Please note that there is no bursary for student teachers learning to teach economics.
- Tuition fee loans (repayable) are available via Student Finance England to cover the £9,000 fees.
- A maintenance loan (repayable) is available for help with living costs: up to £10,702 depending on circumstances.
- Scholarships (non-repayable) may be available – please check on the UCL web-site.
- There are also a range of sources of financial help for students in particular circumstances (e.g. supporting families).
- For more information please visit the Student Finance section of the IOE website.

5.3 Can I have a part-time job to help with funds during the PGCE?

- Some students are able to manage a small (weekend) job during their PGCE, although with the demands of the year I would recommend trying to avoid this if at all possible. Most students who take the PGCE do not have a second job during the year.

6. Employment Prospects

6.1 Will I be able to get a job afterwards?

- The employment record of students on the course is excellent.
- It is important to bear in mind however that as with any course, the Institute cannot guarantee you will get a job after its completion – this part is down to you. We can guarantee that training with us means you will be among the best trained teachers of economics in the country.
- If you are organised (enough to apply for jobs during the course), are a good teacher and are flexible in terms of where you teach, you should have no problems securing a job as an economics teacher.